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THE HOUSEHOLD AND GARDEN CALENDAR.

The Home Vegetable Garden

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio discussion by Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, March 14, 1933.

--oooOooo--

VAN DEMAN:

How do you do, Everybody:

Well, Mr. Beattie, I suppose you're going to have a garden this year?

BEATTIE:

Sure thing, Miss Van Deman, in fact I've already started my garden.

VAN DEMAN:

You believe in getting started early, don't you? How much of a garden do you expect to have this year?

BEATTIE:

About half an acre.

VAN DEMAN:

Then you must expect to feed about five people from your garden.

BEATTIE:

Yes, we want plenty. There are only 3 in our family but we like to have plenty so that we can give some to our neighbors who don't have gardens.

VAN DEMAN:

I remember the other day when we were looking over those live-at-home programs from the States, the half-acre garden seemed to be the size for a family of five. Wind, weather, and bugs permitting, it furnishes enough vegetables to use fresh, and some to can and dry and pickle and store.

BEATTIE:

Yes, a half acre will be all right except for potatoes, sweet potatoes, squashes, and your sweet corn that you want for canning. Grow them outside of the half-acre garden.

VAN DEMAN:

Have you any actual figures on what the products of a half-acre garden are worth?

BEATTIE:

Yes, the extension workers in the States have a lot of figures on farm gardens. Take a look at this picture of a South Carolina family, will you? Don't they look well fed?

(over)

VAN DEMAN:

They certainly do. Why, let me see, there are 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 children and the father and mother.

BEATTIE:

Yes, fourteen in all, but wait until you hear the story of their one-acre garden. They made 75 plantings of vegetables including 20 kinds. They planted something every month except November and December. The seeds for that garden cost less than \$40, and the family had all of the vegetables they could eat. They canned over 400 quarts and sold the surplus crops for nearly a thousand dollars. Of course, that was in 1929 when prices were high. But anyway, it's not a bad record for one acre, is it?

VAN DEMAN:

I should say not and all the family certainly looks the picture of health. But coming back to the question of a garden that will produce fresh vegetables and a surplus for canning and storage, can you give us some idea of how much of each crop to plant, say for a family of five?

BEATTIE:

Yes, Miss Van Deman, if you'll tell me about how much of each vegetable they'll need.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, the State extension people have worked out that pretty well. They're looking at it from the standpoint of health and good nutrition. They figure that a family of five needs somewhere between 40 and 45 pounds of vegetables a week. That's more than 2,000 pounds a year. This total includes potatoes, the yellow and leafy green vegetables, tomatoes, dried beans, and all the other kinds fresh and canned. These food budgets even recommend the number of times to serve the different vegetables each week to keep meals well balanced and appetizing. They also suggest to a farm family how much of each vegetable to can or store so that they will have a good supply all through the year.

Well, Mr. Beattie, you were speaking of your cabbage plants the other day. The Missouri food budget says: "Store 30 heads of cabbage and make at least 20 quarts of sauerkraut."

BEATTIE:

Yes, Miss Van Deman, cabbage is one of our most important green leafy vegetables to use fresh and to store. And we have the advantage that we can grow a very early as well as a late crop. The plants, I spoke of, are for my early crop. It comes early and it goes quickly. So, I only put out about 40 early plants. Then in June, I set about 30 plants of late cabbage. That gives me fall cabbage to store and make into kraut.

VAN DEMAN:

Now, this plan also says: "Serve a leafy vegetable 4 or 5 times a week." That means a variety. So what about spinach, and lettuce, and broccoli, and other greens in your garden?

BEATTIE:

Well, I'm sowing spinach right now. And I have head lettuce plants in my cold frame ready to set in the garden as soon as the ground warms up a bit. I start the broccoli plants just like early cabbage and transplant them to the garden as soon as the danger of hard freezing is over. That with the early cabbage gives us a pretty complete line of early leafy vegetables.

VAN DEMAN:

And for the later ones, what do you plant?

BEATTIE:

Well, the broccoli will hold on pretty well through the summer. But Swiss chard is my main summer leafy vegetable. It stands the heat and you can go right on using it for greens until after frost. Swiss chard is the best summer green, I know of; that is, if you can get it from your own garden. For fall use, I sow more spinach and plenty of turnips for greens as well as roots.

VAN DEMAN:

Coming back to the very early garden, what about radishes?

BEATTIE:

Oh, I plant a row about 20 feet long. We like a few radishes, not many. There are so many other vegetables more important.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, there's no doubt about peas and beans. You'll be planting your early peas very soon, I suppose.

BEATTIE:

Yes indeed, in fact I have some planted now. I always plant my peas just as soon as the ground is in shape to work.

VAN DEMAN:

How many peas do you plant in a half-acre garden?

BEATTIE:

Usually about 3 rows clear across the garden. I make 3 plantings about a week apart, 1 row each time. That gives us peas for our table for about 3 or 4 weeks.

VAN DEMAN:

Does that give you any for canning?

BEATTIE:

No, we always make a special planting of peas for canning. Two rows, each 100 feet long, generally give enough peas to can for a family of five.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, surely. This particular food budget calls for 10 to 15 quarts of canned peas and the same number of canned snap beans. But of course, lots of families use many more than that. It all depends on how many other vegetables they have. With a good pressure canner peas and beans fresh from the garden are easy enough to can.

(over)



BEATTIE:

Yes, Miss Van Deman, and remember you must have good fresh vegetables to make good canned vegetables. I always plant snap beans every two weeks in the early part of the season. In addition I make 2 or 3 fall plantings. As a rule I make one or two special plantings of beans just for canning.

VAN DEMAN:

Onions come along pretty early. Have you started any yet?

BEATTIE:

No, I'm a little late. Onion sets should have been in the ground a week ago here in Washington. Plenty of time yet in the north. I always plant about a thousand of the southern-grown onion seedlings for my storage onions. They ripen late in the summer. For early spring onions I like the old-fashioned multipliers. In some sections all kind of young or peeler onions are called Scallions.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, whatever you call 'em they're mighty good, cooked and served with some of the green tops like asparagus on toast.

BEATTIE:

Well, I'll take mine raw with some good fresh bread and butter.

VAN DEMAN:

All right, I won't quarrel with you about that. How about carrots and beets? Carrots rate high with the vitamin experts.

BEATTIE:

Yes, no garden would be complete without at least one row of each. I make two plantings. A very early planting for spring and summer use, and a late planting for storage. And by the way, beet greens are a mighty good leafy vegetable. When I thin my beets, we always use the tender young plants as beet greens.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, beet greens rate also very high with the nutrition people. Beet greens are unusually high in vitamins and in minerals. But speaking of food values tomatoes are almost in a class by themselves. This Missouri food budget recommends 100 quarts of canned tomatoes for a family of five and all that they can use fresh from the garden.

BEATTIE:

Well, I should say that would require 75 to 100 plants. I'd recommend 25 to 50 early plants, pruned and tied to stakes, and 50 late plants allowed to grow as they will on the ground. If they do reasonably well, that will give plenty of ripe tomatoes for summer use, enough for canning, and also some green tomatoes for pickling. I think I heard you say once that tomatoes are the easiest of all vegetables to can.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, they are so acid and juicy that they may be canned, like fruits, in the hot water bath.

BEATTIE:

When it comes to canning sweet corn it's a different story, isn't it? But our family almost prefers dried sweet corn. Of course, I make several plantings so that from the 4th of July until frost we have roasting ears. You remember I said in the beginning I plant a special patch of sweet corn for canning and drying. I plant my late squashes and pumpkins in that sweet corn patch.

VAN DEMAN:

Don't you grow any summer squashes?

BEATTIE:

Oh yes, I plant 5 or 6 hills of early summer squashes in the garden. Also 4 or 5 hills of cucumbers. When we mentioned beans, we didn't say anything about Limas and pole beans in general. I plant a row of the little Sieva bush lima beans very early in the season. They are quite hardy. They give us beans before the regular limas come into bearing and very often they go right on bearing all summer. Southern gardeners can grow these little Sieva beans where the regular limas will not stand the hot summers. You Northern gardeners will find the regular bunch and pole limas best for your climate.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, Mr. Beattie, we've covered cabbage and the other leafy vegetables; peas and beans; onions, carrots, and beets; tomatoes, squashes, cucumbers, and corn. That must about fill up that half-acre garden.

BEATTIE:

No, not entirely. I usually find room for a row of okra. We like to can okra with tomatoes for soup. Of course okra is a Southern vegetable, but you can grow it as far north as southern New York and southern Michigan.

And I usually get in a row or two of late celery for fall and winter.

After all, the way to get the most out of a half-acre garden is to keep the land working every minute of the growing season.

VAN DEMAN:

And plan the food budget and the garden together, I'd say.

BEATTIE:

All right, since we're agreed on that, let's sign off 'til next Tuesday.

